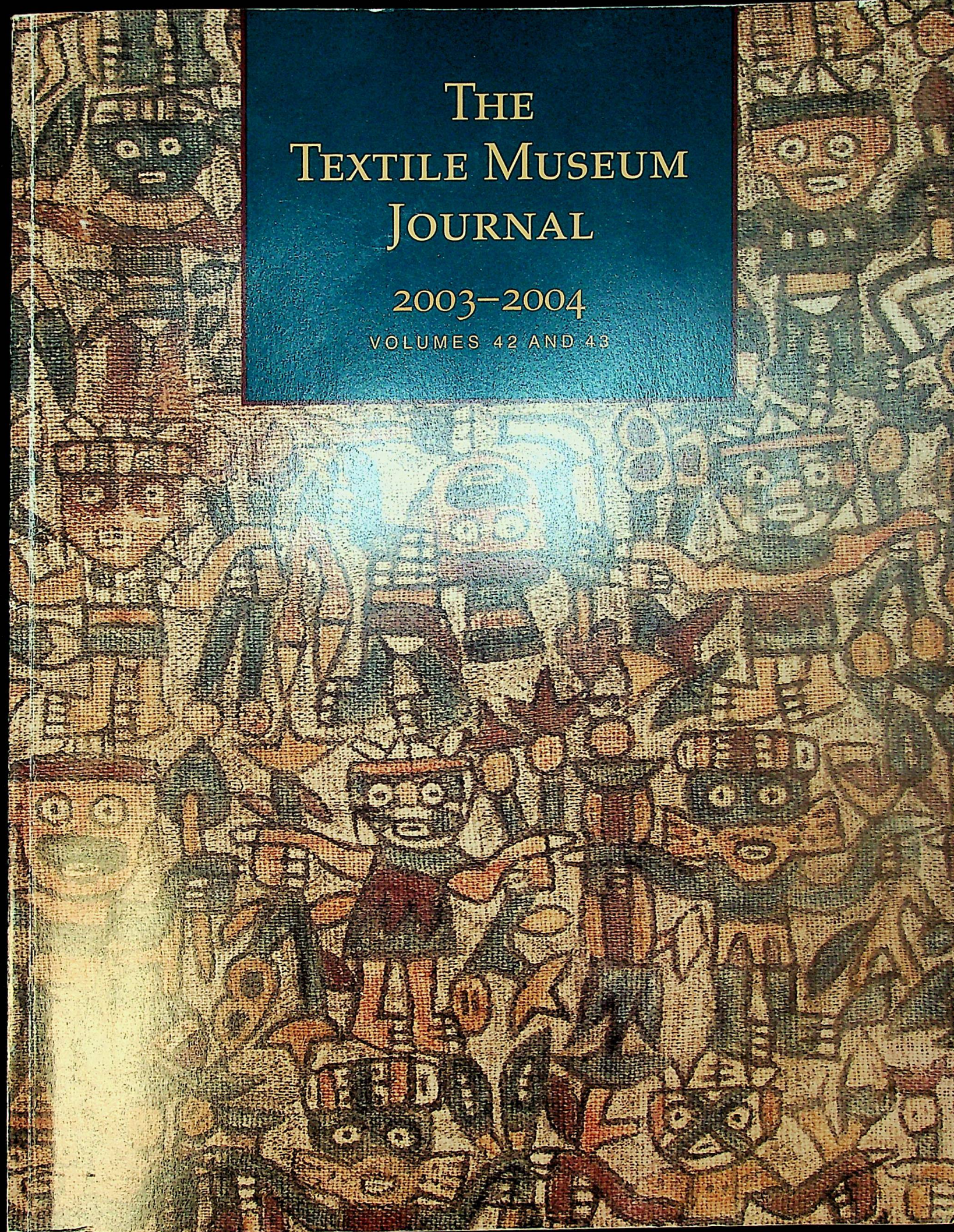


THE
TEXTILE MUSEUM
JOURNAL

2003-2004

VOLUMES 42 AND 43



CONTRIBUTORS

Publication of *The Textile Museum Journal* relies upon generous financial support.
We wish to thank the following contributors to this issue:

THE CHARLES DELMAR FOUNDATION

RONALD AND MAXINE LINDE FOUNDATION

BÉA WELSH WEICKER

GIVEN IN MEMORY OF ED FRANQUEMONT

Front and back covers: Skirt panel from a woman's dress (detail, warp direction horizontal), overall size: 82 x 158.5 cm. The Textile Museum 1964.31.2, museum purchase. See Mary Frame, *What the Women Were Wearing: A Deposit of Early Nasca Dresses and Shawls from Cahuachi, Peru*, pp. 13-53, fig. 24.

ISSN: 0083-7407

© 2005 The Textile Museum.

All rights reserved.

Authors retain copyright for their individual contributions.

THE TEXTILE MUSEUM JOURNAL
2003-2004 VOLUMES 42 AND 43

CONTENTS

Eureka! Examples of Change in Traditional Andean Textiles from Chinchero Edward M. Franquemont	3
What the Women Were Wearing: A Deposit of Early Nasca Dresses and Shawls from Cahuachi, Peru Mary Frame	13
Introduction to Ecuadorian Textile Techniques Ann Pollard Rowe	54
Leaf Fibers in Highland Ecuador Laura M. Miller, Mrill Ingram, Ann Pollard Rowe, and Lynn A. Meisch	56
Spinning in Highland Ecuador Lynn A. Meisch, Laura M. Miller, and Ann Pollard Rowe	76
Shellfish Purple in Coastal Ecuador Karen E. Stothert	98
Blouse Making in Mariano Acosta, Ecuador Marilee Schmit Nason	108
Felt Hat Making in Highland Ecuador Ann Pollard Rowe and Breenan Conterón	114
Plaited Hat Making in Highland Ecuador, in Others' Words, Panama Hats Ann Pollard Rowe and Lynn A. Meisch	120
Author Index 1962-2003 Compiled by Jessica Sloan, updated by John Morabito	129



THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

2320 S Street NW Washington DC 20008-4088
202-667-0441 (phone) 202-483-0994 (fax)
www.textilemuseum.org

Plaited Hat Making in Highland Ecuador, in Others' Words, Panama Hats

Ann Pollard Rowe and Lynn A. Meisch

The beautiful but misnamed "Panama hats" are actually made primarily in Ecuador. They have been a major export of Ecuador since at least the early nineteenth century, although the origins of the industry are obscure. The hats were first made on the coast, where the source plant grows, around Montecristi and Jipijapa, in Manabí province. For example, William Stevenson, who was in Ecuador in 1808, reports that "many thousands" of hats were made annually by "indians" around Jipijapa.¹ Around 1845, officials in Cuenca and in Azogues in southern Cañar province brought people from Manabí to teach hat making (map 1).²

The misnomer probably derives from the fact that the hats were shipped through Panama on their way to Europe and North America.³ In the mid-nineteenth century, Ecuador exported more than 220,000 hats annually.⁴ Export has fluctuated in the twentieth century between highs of approximately 412,000 dozen in 1946 and 418,000 dozen in 1977 to lows of 252,000 dozen in 1952 and 157,000 in 1972.⁵ By 2000 production was down dramatically on account of El Niño and competition from less expensive Chinese imitations.⁶ The hats are also worn in Azuay and southern Cañar by cholo men and women, and by some Saraguros in Loja as well (fig. 1, see also fig. 8).⁷ The people who make the hats in southern Cañar and Azuay are cholos, of intermediate socioeconomic status between indigenous people and whites. They speak



Fig. 1. Selling leaves for hatmaking in the Azogues market, southern Cañar province. Two of the vendors wear finished hats. Slide by Laura M. Miller, 1992.

Spanish so the terminology used both here and on the coast is Spanish.

The material used is the immature leaf of a shrubby relative of the palm, native to tropical America, identified in all the sources as *Carludovica palmata* Ruiz et Pavón (family Cyclanthaceae). Although not really a palm, the large leaves are deeply divided toward the stem into numerous narrow sections. The plant grows primarily on the western slopes of hills near the Ecuadorian coast, mainly in the provinces of Guayas and Manabí.⁸ In Ecuador, the material is called *paja toquilla*. *Paja* is the Spanish word for "straw," while *toquilla* is the diminutive of *toca*, headdress, now usually meaning a hood or bonnet.

Similar hats are made from the same material (called *iraca*) in the department of Nariño in southern Colombia, where the industry was apparently introduced in the mid-nineteenth century.⁹ Similar hats, again of the same material (called *paja toquilla* or *bombonaje*), are also made and worn in northern Peru.¹⁰ Some hats are also made on the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, where the material is called *jipi*¹¹ and in lowland Bolivia, where it is called *jipijapa*,¹² suggesting Ecuadorian origin. No name is well established in English (the term "Panama hat plant" is sometimes found), but *jipijapa* seems the most appropriate of those available.

The technique used for the Ecuadorian hats yields a much lighter and more flexible structure than the common European technique of making hats by sewing a long strip of braided grain straw into a spiral. The Ecuadorian hats are made by interlacing (or plaiting) the leaf strands, beginning in the center of the crown and working outward. The diagonally interlaced structure (also found in some Ecuadorian baskets) is less unusual than its radial construction. This technique is not mentioned in Bignia Kuoni's valuable 1981 book on Spanish basketry. It may therefore derive from an indigenous source, though because of poor preservation conditions on the coast, there is no archaeological evidence.¹³ The shape of the hats, however, is European.

The harvest and processing of the leaves on the coast is described by various sources, including French anthropologist Paul Rivet (1907), American journalist Tom Miller (1986, 2000), Ecuadorian scholar María Leonor Aguilar de Tamariz (1988), and French journalist Martine Buchet (n.d. [1995]).¹⁴ The variations in detail among these sources are presumably attributable to individual and regional preferences.

In the town of Febres Cordero in Guayas

province, visited by Miller, the fields belong to the community and are apportioned to individual families annually. The plant has a stalk that is 2 to 3 meters (6–10 feet) tall, with leaves 60 to 90 centimeters (2–3 feet) long, fanning out from the top, and it requires little or no cultivation. The men (called *pajeros*) use a machete to cut the unopened leaves, still in their green casing, just above the point where they connect to the trunk. The shoots (*cogollo*) are about a meter (yard) long and 0.5 to 1 centimeter ($\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ inch) in diameter. Rivet notes that the leaflets of shoots growing underneath others are longer and whiter. Bundles of forty or fifty shoots are tied together with leaves and carried back to town either on pack mules or by the men on their backs, or by truck if there is a road nearby.¹⁵

The next step is to peel off the casing, freeing the many thin light-colored leaflets. Rivet also notes that the outer and center leaflets are unusable and therefore are removed. Miller watched the *pajero* use his fingernail to strip away the vein, spine, and coarse edge of each leaflet.¹⁶ A different female worker may also do this job. The worker may use a needle or awl instead of his or her fingernail. An awl has a steel point on a wooden handle, but another journalist describes a tool made from the jawbone of a deer.¹⁷ The cuts are made from base to tip.

Then the leaves are boiled for 20 to 30 minutes, traditionally in an earthenware pot, according to Aguilar. They are shaken to remove the water and then hung over a clothesline to dry¹⁸ or laid out under the house. As it dries, each leaflet curls up on itself from both sides, yielding a long cylinder. The worker has to take care that the leaflets are not exposed to direct sunlight and that the strips do not stick to each other during the drying process, which takes at least a day.

Additional treatment may be given to material destined for the finest hats. Aguilar describes a process of heating the leaves over a fire and rubbing them to break off any damaged parts. Both Buchet and Miller note that the leaflets may be split into narrower strips, then boiled and dried again.

Rivet notes that the green leaves may be bleached by exposure to the sun at the end of the day or by boiling them with lemon juice in the water. Buchet describes placing the leaves on a clay slab over a brazier in which sulfur is burned for an hour or two to bleach them, after which they are washed again.

After they have been dried, the leaves destined for the highlands are bundled into large

sacks (*bultos*) and trucked to Guayaquil, where they are sold to a wholesaler. From Guayaquil, the material is taken to a warehouse in Cuenca, where it is sorted into three grades. From there it is trucked to the weekly markets in Azuay and Cañar, where the *bultos* are broken up and sold to the individual hat makers. The material is sold by the *tallo*, multiple strands attached to a common stem (fig. 1). Each stem has an average of 28 leaflets, 55 to 60 centimeters (22–24 inches) long, up to a maximum of 75 centimeters (29 ½ inches). Rivet says that about 8 centimeters (3 inches) at the tip and 5 centimeters (2 inches) at the butt end are removed before the hat is started. Five stems are enough to weave one coarse hat; ten or more are needed for a fine hat.¹⁹

Both males and females make hats. Lynn Meisch documented hat making in 1979 at the

home of Dolores Peláez and Abel Rodas in Chordeleg, Azuay province (east of Cuenca), but other hatmakers in the area use a similar process.²⁰ The hat is started at the center of the crown (*plantilla*), and most hatmakers use multiples of four elements, interlacing each other at right angles (figs. 2, 3A).²¹ After the initial interlacement, alternate elements are bent in a clockwise direction and the remaining elements in a counterclockwise direction, so that the elements in opposing directions can be interlaced with each other to make a disk.

The work is done in a circle, with every other element bent under the two next to it, producing over-two, under-two interlacing in diagonal (twill) alignment. The circle is worked clockwise (*la vuelta*, circuit), then counterclockwise.²² After a round is completed the strands are

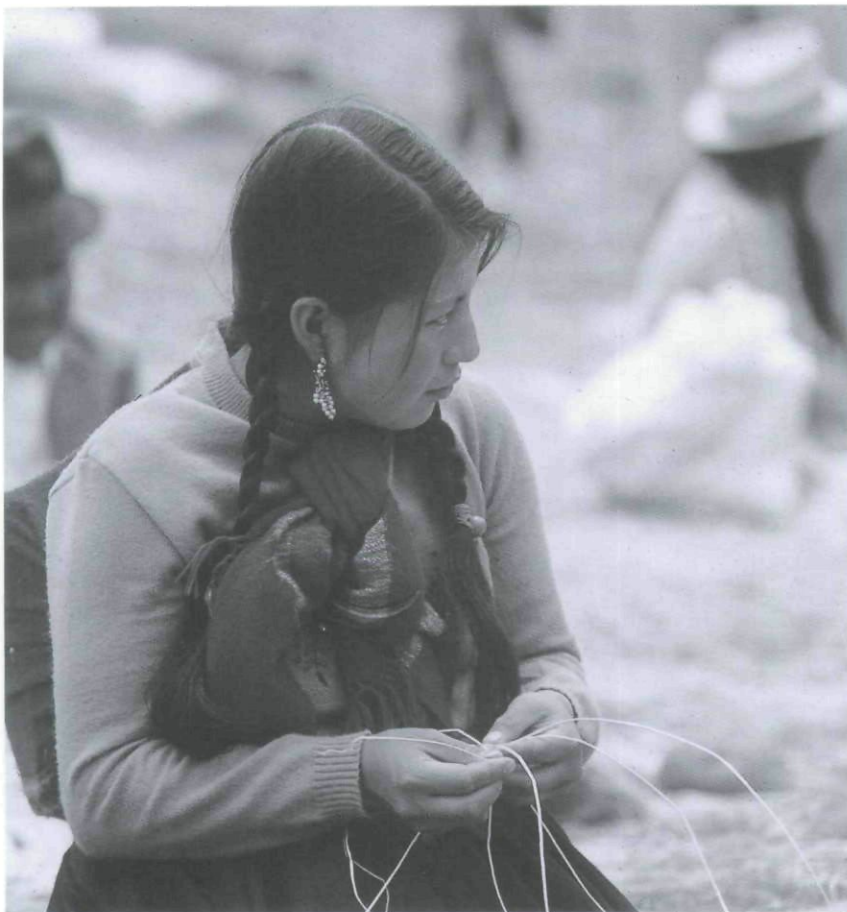


Fig. 2. Starting a hat with four pieces of leaf, eight spokes. Azogues market, southern Cañar market. Slide by Laura M. Miller, 1992.

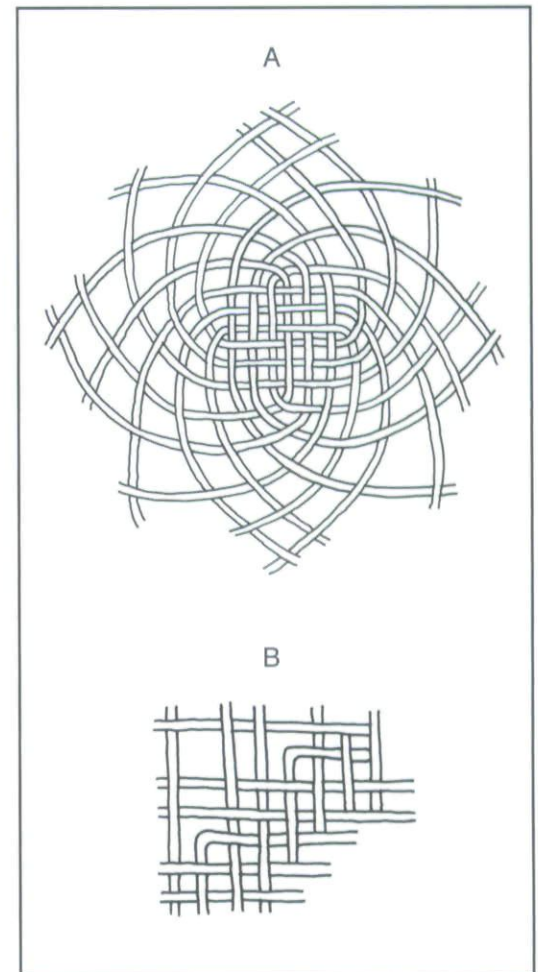


Fig. 3. Interlacing in plaited hats: A. Typical start. B. Addition of folded elements to the brim. Drawings by Louise O'Sullivan based on diagrams by Ann Pollard Rowe.

pulled tight in the opposite direction (also called *la vuelta*). Some hats have areas of openwork, made by crossing or twisting the strands, with the half twists separated by areas of plain (over-one, under-one) interlacing.

At intervals, more strands are added by being laid between existing strands and then interlaced. The strands are added regularly in a circle, the same number trending clockwise as counter-clockwise, so that the diameter of the hat is uniform. These circles of added elements are called *engire*²³ and their number is a convenient way of gauging the fineness of a hat. An ordinary hat may have four rows of additions near the beginning and another near the edge of the top, but fine hats have more. These rows can have new strands added as often as every other strand going in the same direction. The ends of the new strands stick out on the inside of the hat and are

trimmed later with a knife. On the outside, the rows of additions are marked by three-span floats. In rows where additions are not made, the work becomes looser in order to maintain a flat surface.

When the top is about 5 centimeters (2 inches) in diameter, it is worked out in a triangle (*la pasada*). Strands are then interlaced along the edge of this triangle until the full circle is completed at this width. During the interlacing, the hat is repeatedly dampened with a corncob dipped in water to keep the strands pliable. To work the sides of the crown (*copa*), the hat may

Fig. 5. Unfinished hat showing the band around the base of the crown and the triangle in progress. Chordeleg, Azuay province. Photograph by Lynn A. Meisch, 1993.



Fig. 4. Supporting the start of a hat on a cord around the neck. Chordeleg, Azuay province. Photograph by Lynn A. Meisch, 1978.

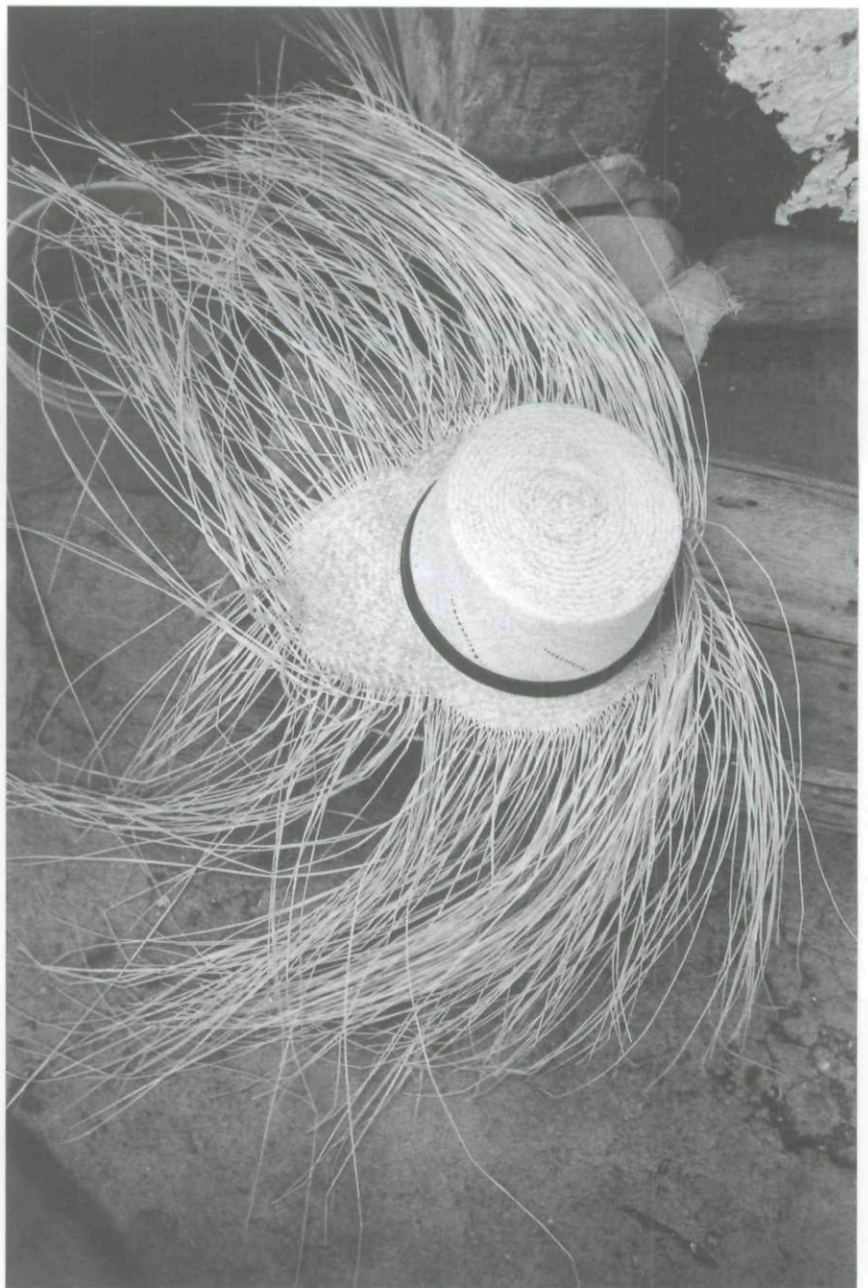




Fig. 6. Working the brim of a hat. The elements going in perpendicular directions are apparent. Dolores Peláez, Chordeleg, Azuay province. Photograph by Lynn A. Meisch, 1978.

be put over a string around the worker's neck to help support it (fig. 4). Otherwise, the hat is simply supported in the maker's hands or lap.²⁴

When the crown is complete, the hat is placed over a round wooden mold (*horma*) and held in place with a leather band (*cinturón*). It is dampened and left in place for an hour or two. Then it is taken off the mold with the leather band still in place and the brim (*falda*, skirt, or *ala*, wing) is made (figs. 5, 6). There is another row of additions at the beginning of the brim, made in a different way (fig. 3B). The new element (which does not have to be as long as the first ones) is bent at right angles and then interlaced between existing elements.

The edge (*remate*) is made by threading the strands going in one direction on a needle and working them back toward the crown on the upper surface for a short distance (fig. 7). Before trimming, the artisan pulls each strand tightly (*asocar*), which lifts the edge of the brim. The



Fig. 7. Finishing the edge of the brim using a needle. The turned-back elements now lie on top of the brim. Dolores Peláez, Chordeleg, Azuay province. Photograph by Lynn A. Meisch, 1978.



Fig. 8. Hats bought and sold in the Azogues market, southern Cañar province. Several men and women wear finished hats. Slide by Lynn A. Meisch, 1979.

remaining strands are trimmed just under the edge of the brim. Some people, however, sell the hats to the middlemen with the edge unworked and the bristly edges sticking out (fig. 8).

It takes Dolores Peláez about twelve hours to make an ordinary hat. In 1979, she bought the materials for 30 sucres and sold the finished hat for 40 sucres, leaving her with a profit of only 10 sucres, or U.S. 40 cents. People make hats as a supplement to their agricultural and other work since it obviously does not pay enough to provide a living in itself. The work can be done whenever it is not too cold, which causes the material to become brittle and break easily.

Middlemen, called *perros* (dogs), buy hats in the villages and sell them to factories in Cuenca for finishing. The edges are finished and trimmed if that has not already been done. The hats may then be washed. They are then put in large vats of bleaching solution for two or three days, or sometimes they are dyed with synthetic dyes or walnut bark. After being sun dried, they are put in a closet with sulfur fumes overnight for further bleaching and disinfecting. Then each hat is placed on a mold and the crown (or the entire hat) is beaten with a wooden mallet and the brim



Fig. 9. Steam press for finishing hats in a factory in Cuenca, Azuay province. Photograph by Lynn A. Meisch, 1993.

ironed by hand, after which it is steamed.²⁵ A more modern technique of performing these last steps, which Lynn Meisch observed in Cuenca in 1993, is to use a hand-operated steam press (fig. 9). Locally marketed hats may have a sizing brushed on the upper surface. Rivet describes the sizing as made of a mixture of milk of white lead (a white pigment) and a little gum, after which the hat is ironed, protected from the heat with a cloth.²⁶

A hatband (*cinta* or *cintillo*) is added to locally marketed hats, and a "made in Ecuador" tag to those to be exported to the U.S. Finally, the hats are sorted according to style and size. Lynn Meisch watched one worker do nothing but measure the size of the brims with a ruler and pile the hats accordingly. Then they are boxed and shipped to customers around the world.

The hats are made in many styles, for both local and export markets. The finest is the Montecristi, made in the province of Manabí on the coast. These hats are very light and pliable, and some are sold folded in half and rolled up in balsa-wood boxes. The Cuenca style has a number of substyles, the most important and common of which is the *brisa* (breeze from the northeast), which has 1/1 interlacing and openwork.²⁷

Notes

1. Stevenson 1825, vol. II, p. 234.

2. Rivet 1907, p. 10; Aguilar 1988, p. 27, probably based on Albornoz 1949.

3. Rivet 1907, p. 1.

4. Miller 1986, p. 79.

5. Aguilar 1988, pp. 137, 132.

6. Miller 2000, p. 56.

7. Rowe ed. 1998, chapters 13–14.

8. See map in Aguilar 1988, p. 5.

9. Català Roca 1981, pp. 167–69; Cortés [1989]; Cardale Schrimpff 1992, pp. 113–15; Villegas and Villegas 1992, pp. 155–56.

10. Weberbauer 1945, p. 148; Castañeda 1981, p. 71; Olivas and Giannoni 2003, pp. 54–68.

11. Fernández de Calderón et al. eds. 1998, p. 177.

12. Healy 2001, pp. 294, 312.

13. Aguilar (1988, p. 23) describes a document by Francisco Delgado, who arrived on the Manabí coast in 1630; it mentions indigenous manufacture of some kind of rain hood using leaves of a tree, which the local people called *paja*. A major problem with the Aguilar book as well as the other available references on these hats is that no specific bibliographic sources are cited for the historical information. We were not able to consult Albornoz (1949).

14. Rivet 1907, pp. 5–6; Miller 1986, pp. 66–72; Miller 2000, p. 54; Aguilar 1988, pp. 41–53; Buchet and Hamani [1995], pp. 42, 48.

15. For a photo of the green bundles, see Buchet and Hamani [1995], p. 74.

16. Miller 1986, p. 72.

17. Wolff 1983, p. 90.

18. Photo in Buchet and Hamani [1995], p. 58.

19. Miller 1986, pp. 118–21.

20. The description of the making process that follows is based partly on field observations and a film by Lynn A. Meisch and partly on analysis of finished hats by Ann Pollard Rowe.

21. A related start is diagrammed by Aguilar (1988, p. 60). This type of start is apparently also common on the coast. A Montecristi (coastal) hat purchased by Ann Pollard Rowe in Quito, however, has a start with some six elements interlaced a few times in 2/2 twill with a similar number in the perpendicular direction, at which point the elements are bent into a clockwise or counterclockwise direction, and more are added. Rivet (1907, p. 15) says that an oval start is used in Catacaos, in the Department of Piura, Peru, and that in Antioquia in Colombia, the starting elements are simply crossed at right angles.

22. Rivet (1907, p. 15) and Aguilar (1988, pp. 62–63) use the term *carrera* (course) for these rounds.

23. Rivet 1907, p. 15; Aguilar 1988, p. 62.

24. This technique contrasts with that for hat making on the coast where a tripod stand is used and the hat clamped between wooden blocks, which are in turn topped with a pillow on which the maker leans (Buchet and Hamani [1995], pp. 46–50).

25. Miller 1986, pp. 186–87.

26. Rivet 1907, p. 16.

27. Aguilar 1988, pp. 88–92. The structure is like that in Emery 1980, fig. 84.

References

Aguilar de Tamariz, María Leonor

1988 *Tejiendo la vida... : Las artesanías de la paja toquilla en el Ecuador*. Centro Interamericano de Artesanías y Artes Populares (CIDAP), Cuenca.

Albornoz, Víctor Manuel

1949 *Cuenca y su industria de tejido de sombreros de paja toquilla*. Self-published, Cuenca.

Buchet, Martine (text), and Laziz Hamani (photographs)

[1995] *Panama: A Legendary Hat*. Editions Assouline, Paris.

Cardale Schrimppff, Marianne

1992 *Basketry in the Northern Andes and Intermontane Valleys of Colombia, Basketmakers: Meaning and Form in Native American Baskets*, pp. 113–29. Edited by Linda Mowatt, Howard Morphy, and Penny Dransart. Monograph 5, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Castañeda Leon, Luisa

1981 *Vestido tradicional del Peru / Traditional Dress of Peru*. Museo Nacional de la Cultura Peruana, Lima.

Català Roca, Francesc (photographs)

1981 *Arte popular de América*. Editorial Blume, Barcelona.

Cortés Moreno, Emilia

[1989] *Así éramos, así somos: Textiles y tintes de Nariño*. Banco de la República, Museo de Oro, Pasto-Nariño.

Emery, Irene

1980 *The Primary Structures of Fabrics: An Illustrated Classification*. The Textile Museum, Washington. Originally published 1966.

Fernández de Calderón, Cándida, Alberto Sarmiento, and Victoria Fuente de Álvarez (editors)

1998 *Great Masters of Mexican Folk Art: From the Collection of Fomento Cultural Banamex*. Fomento Cultural Banamex, México.

Healy, Kevin

2001 *Llamas, Weavings, and Organic Chocolate: Multicultural Grassroots Development in the Andes and Amazon of Bolivia*. University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana.

Kuoni, Bignia

1981 *Cesteria tradicional iberica*. Ediciones del Serbal, Barcelona.

Miller, Tom

1986 *The Panama Hat Trail: A Journey from South America*. William Morrow and Co., New York.

2000 The Crown of Montecristi, *Natural History*, vol. 109, no. 5, June, pp. 54–63. American Museum of Natural History, New York.

Olivas Weston, Marcela (text), and Daniel Giannoni (photographs)

2003 *Arte popular de Cajamarca*. Antares, artes y letras, Lima.

Rivet, Paul

1907 L'industrie du chapeau en Équateur et au Pérou, *Bulletin de la Société de géographie commerciale de Paris*, vol. 30, pp. 1–32.

Rowe, Ann Pollard (editor)

1998 *Costume and Identity in Highland Ecuador*. Text by Lynn A. Meisch, Laura M. Miller, Ann P. Rowe, and others. The Textile Museum, Washington, and University of Washington Press, Seattle and London.

Stevenson, William Bennett

1825 *Historical and Descriptive Narrative of Twenty Years' Residence in South America*. 3 vols. Hurst, Robinson, and Co., London.

Villegas, Liliana, and Benjamin Villegas

1992 *Artefactos: Colombian Crafts from the Andes to the Amazon*. Rizzoli, New York.

Weberbauer, August

1945 *El mundo vegetal de los Andes peruanos: Estudio fitogeográfico*. Estación Experimental Agrícola de la Molina, Dirección de Agricultura, Ministerio de Agricultura, Lima.

Wolff, Anthony

1983 The Perfect Panama: A Search in the Hinterlands of Ecuador, *Connoisseur*, vol. 213, no. 857, July, pp. 86–92. New York.

Copyright of *Textile Museum Journal* is the property of Textile Museum and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.